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ABSTRACT

A sampling of definitions indicates a certain amount of ambiguity and confusion about development and how it differs from other concepts such as growth and change. Any attempt to clarify this concept should begin initially with identification of the essential meaning of the term and then consideration of its characteristics and how it differs from other related concepts. A possible definition is development as a self-generating process whereby human potentials and relationships are optimized for the purpose of satisfying needs within the context of changing belief and value systems of a cultural unit and the larger human community. Some implications of this definition of development should be noted. First, if development takes place within the context of changing belief and value systems, then one must know what these beliefs and values are and how they are changing. Second, for meaningful development to occur, it must be implemented with the full participation of the people at the local level. Third, development is not comparative except for cultural units that have similar belief and value systems. (YLB)

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DEFINING DEVELOPMENT

Alvin S. Lackey*

> "The technical assistance establishment is a veritable intellectual and cultural power structure. Its worldview of underdevelopment reality and its hierarchy of values determine the priorities, methodologies, and instrumentalities to be used in dealing with the conditions of underdevelopment. This is a monopoly that provides the technical assistance establishment with powerful normative and methodological controls over the "development" process. We could also refer to this particular monopoly as the power to perpetuate a dominant 'paradigm' of development."
>
> Steven F. Hochschield[1]

The quotation above by Hochschield and his use of the term "paradigm power" rings sufficiently true to make any Western intellectual or development specialist uneasy when talking about Third World development. And yet expositions on development by Third World scholars and authors dealing with liberation, dependency theory, and the New International Economic Order appear to be as politically lopsided as do the economic concepts employed by academicians and technicians within the donor nations. While it is true that the economic growth paradigm has held sway for a number of years; it is becoming commonplace to challenge the equivalence of economic growth with development and to point out that the trickle-down theory hasn't resulted in many trickles. As Jerome Levinson and Juan de Onis[2] point out, an assumption far better than trickle-down is that the economic benefits of development will be absorbed within the existing socio-economic structure by those who already have wealth and power rather than resulting in an egalitarian reordering of the economic system.

Furthermore, as noted by Anderson[3], the previous agreement on the objectives of development no longer exist. As with many social changes the pendulum is now swinging far to the opposite side. If top down development doesn't reach the bottom then perhaps the answer is to start at the bottom and let development work its way up. The Basic Needs approach of the ILO, the reduction of absolute poverty proposed by the World Bank and the New Directions of A.I.D. which aims at the poorest of the poor, may all be viewed as bottom-up approaches to development. However, these approaches still rely heavily on economic and physical variables to measure development.

A major reason for retaining the GNP as a definition of development lies in the illusion that it can be measured and used on a comparative basis. As important as economic growth may be, the GNP really isn't that strong a measure. It has important problems of composition, validity and comparability which make it a gross if not misleading indicator even of economic growth, let alone development. The recent rapid increases in the GNP per capita of the OPEC countries should perhaps deal the final blow to the notion that high rates of economic growth are equivalent with development. Thus, while Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates all have a GNP per capita of over $20,000 as compared to an average of $11,000 for the industrialized countries (1980), few would say that these OPEC nations head the list of developed countries. Unfortunately, the proclivity to define as real only those things we can measure is still with us. This wouldn't be so bad if we could measure everything, but trouble ensues when we create measurements out of available data just because they are available and then use these data to develop artificial measures which are used to define the things we can't measure. In view of the difficulties with the GNP, Martin H. McLaughlin, Morris D. Morris and others of the Oversens Development Council have proposed the Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI)[4] to be used in conjunction with the GNP. The idea behind this measure is that there is a qualitative aspect of life which transcends economics. The components of this Index are: infant mortality, life expectancy at age one, and literacy. One of the main reasons for selecting these variables is that information about them is widely available. But whether or not living longer and being able to read is what one ordinarily thinks about as the quality of life is another matter. Whether Third World Countries will accept such a

* Alvin S. Lackey, Ph.D., is Professor of Community Development at the University of Missouri - Columbia (U.S.A.) and serves as Co-ordinator of the Interdisciplinary Minor in International Development.

definition of quality remains to be seen. It is not even clear whether infant mortality, life expectancy, and literacy are the best measures of health and education which might be devised. The availability of uniform and comparable data on these variables is also open to serious question.

As Wells[5] points out most of our definitions of development are usually more concerned with how to measure it than with the basic idea or concept of development. Blumer[6] has also commented on the need for a generic term before we attempt to operationalize it. However, some authors like Uphoff and Ilchman, Dudley Seers, Denis Goulet, Peter Berger and the Timbergen group have attempted to define development independently of its measurement. According to Uphoff and Ilchman,[7] development is in the final analysis, a matter of productivity - regardless of how productivity is measured. Furthermore, productivity is not limited to economics but includes the social and political spheres as well. In economics, productivity refers to the capacity or potential for the production of goods and services. In social relations, productivity refers to the production of esteem and deference and in the political arena, productivity refers to the increase and distribution of authority. Informational development is also included in their frame of reference. Insofar as productivity - as distinguished from actual production - is increasing in these areas, it may be said that development is taking place.

For Seers,[8] development is a normative term which has the universal aim of realizing the potential of the human personality. To realize this aim, three things are necessary: an adequate income to purchase the physical necessities of life such as food, clothing, and shelter; some form of employment or meaningful productive role in society; and equality. The questions to ask about a country's development are: what is happening to poverty, unemployment and equality? If all three of these are becoming less severe, then development is taking place. If one or two of these conditions is growing worse, then development is not occurring even if the GNP per capita is soaring. In a latter article Seers[9] emphasizes self-reliance and national independence as important development criteria.

Goulet,[10] while emphasizing ethical questions, suggests that development may be used in two different ways. On one hand development connotes a terminal condition or end-state. On the other hand it refers to the process of successive approximations whereby you arrive at an end-point. Development, he says, "covers the entire gamut of changes by which a social system, with optimal regard for the wishes of individuals and sub-systemic components of that system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory in some way toward some condition regarded as 'humanly' better." Development involves values and the meaning of life itself. Quantitative improvements in income, life expectancy, education, etc. are necessary to improve the quality of life but the most important elements of development are not subject to quantitative measurement.

Peter Berger[11] says that development is a political and normative term which, put simply, means good growth and desirable modernization within the context of moral judgement and public policy. It implies a general improvement in the well being of the population. However, Berger attacks the ideal of productivity and its underlying assumptions about the nature of man which hold that "Man is above all, homo faber. To be human is to work, to produce, to transform and dominate the world. Such a notion of man is almost everywhere in sharp contradiction to indigenous Third World religious and philosophical traditions. It is emphatically Western in provenance and its ascent in the Third World...represents a global triumph of Western values." However, while this conquest has been going on, the ethic of productivity and rationality is being seriously challenged in the West through a resurgence of 'irrationality', 'mysticism' and attacks on materialism within the youth culture and counterculture.

The Timbergen group[12] in its report to the Club of Rome equates development with a life of dignity and well-being for all human beings in their roles as citizens, producers, and consumers. "The key to development resides in the satisfaction of individual and collective material and non-material needs within the framework of

policies geared to specific sets of circumstances and relevant institutions." The main components of new development strategies proposed by this group include the satisfaction of needs; the eradication of poverty; self-reliance and participation; and the exercise of public power to ensure an equitable distribution of welfare.

It is evident from this sampling of definitions that there is a certain amount of conceptual ambiguity and confusion about development and how it differs from other concepts such as growth and change. Any attempt to clarify this concept should begin initially with an attempt to identify the essential meaning of the term and then to look at some of its characteristics and how it differs from other related concepts. Operationalizing the definition and devising instruments to measure it should come at a later stage. Whether or not we have measuring instruments available should not be a criterion for coming to agreement on what we want the term to mean. The realization that we might not have measuring instruments readily available should not discourage us. It is healthier to admit that we don't know how to measure something than it is to use whatever data or instruments happen to be available and in the process convert the concept into something different than what we want it to mean. This latter process is dangerous, misleading, and basically unnecessary, except for the allocation of funds which is heavily political in any case.

It is helpful, in cases of conceptual confusion, to consult some standard dictionaries to see if any of the ordinary meanings of words can be of any service.

The first meaning of the word 'develop' in the American Heritage Dictionary is "to expand or realize the potentialities" and the term 'development' is defined as the act of developing. In Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1977, the first meaning of 'develop' is "to make visible or manifest". The second meaning is "to evolve the possibilities of" or "to promote the growth of" and development is deinfed as "the act, process or result of developing". Thus, we can say in the generic sense that development is the process of bringing forth potentials.

If we can agree on this much then three questions arise. The first question relates to the subject or unit of development and asks: Whose potentials are to be brought forth? The second question is: Development for what? Why are we bringing forth these potentials? The third question pertains to which potentials: Are we talking about all potentials or only selected potentials and if so, how do we decide which ones?

To answer the first question, I suggest that there are several different units of development all of which pertain to people and their relationshins with each other. Within countries there is human or individual development, social or group development, community development, regional development, and national development. At the international level there is regional development and world development.

In response to the second question of "development for what?" I would argue that the purpose of bringing forth potentials is to enable people to meet their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual <u>needs</u>. Maslow's need hierarchy of physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem, self-actualization, knowledge and understanding, and aesthetic needs seem pertinent here, although I would argue against their strict hierarchical nature. Except in extreme circumstances people seem to have many of these needs simultaneously and for this reason the basic needs approach to development, which gives almost exclusive attention to first level needs, will probably face some of the same difficulties as the trickle-down theory. That is, it is too simplistic and evidences an incomplete understanding of human needs. I would argue that such things as symbolism, justice, freedom and dignity are as basic to human functioning as food and clean water. Furthermore, the means by which basic needs are met are as important as the needs themselves. Indeed, the means employed are themselves a basic need. Arguments supporting freedom as a condition of development by Dudley Seers and Julius Nyerere support this view. If all people needed were such things as food, water, shelter, clothes, etc. they may find these in prison or the military forces but these avenues don't appear to be desirable means for the satisfaction of these needs. The

basic needs approach is entirely too materialistic in nature, mechanistic in approach, and universal in application to represent an adequate policy or objective of development. While a "developed" people will have these needs met it doesn't follow that meeting these needs is equivalent to development. I emphasize that the purpose of development is to satisfy needs rather than wants, desires and luxuries. It isn't that people's potentials aren't useful to achieve wants and luxuries but it is not necessary to achieve these to be developed. Development can take place at a much lower level.

The third question of which potentials should be brought forth is more difficult, but I would suggest that we are not interested in all potentials because the human animal has the potential for actions which are harmful to individual and social well being. Therefore, the potentials which should be activated are those abilities and relationships which permit the satisfaction of needs within the context of belief and value systems of the social-political unit to which people belong and in conformity with the belief and value systems of the larger human community to which we all belong. This latter requirement of conforming to the values of the larger human community is necessary to avoid situations where the beliefs and values of one cultural group may be inimical to other people. This might be the case if for example the values of one cultural group fostered racial superiority and the elimination of other cultural groups. One might argue that this also is development but it is negative and is not what we ordinarily mean when we use the term development which is a positive concept. Some universal values contained in the United Nations Charter and The Universal Declaration of Human Rights are listed below.

Selected Universal Values

- the inherent dignity and worth of the human person
- equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family including the right to life, liberty and security of person
- equality before the law
- freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression
- the right to participate in government
- the right to have a freely elected government which derives its authority from the will of the people
- everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of (one's) personality is possible
- no one has the right to destroy the rights or freedoms of others
- the economic and social advancement of all peoples should be promoted using international machinery
- tolerance, understanding, friendship and peace

As noted by the Atlantic Council, values of "the dignity and worth of individuals and their freedom to choose a form of government, of worship, and a way of life for themselves and their children...are values intrinsic to the humanity of all peoples including those subject to totalitarian rule".[13]

The notion of relationships needs to be given special attention at this point, to recognize the potential for organizing different institutional and social structures which are at once a potentiality and a means for bringing forth or limiting other human potentials. Individual capacities alone are insufficient to meet all physical, emotional and spiritual needs; there must be some form of social structure, and not all social structures are equally instrumental in meeting needs. Thus, these structures are both a means and an object of development.

With these considerations in mind I would define development as a self-generating process whereby human potentials and relationships are optimized for the purpose of satisfying needs within the context of changing belief and value systems of a cultural unit and the larger human community. In this definition the term 'optimized' is used rather than maximized to account for the fact that beliefs and values may be in conflict with each other and the maximization of one value may interfere with the maximization of another. This is true within cultural groups as well as between them. Therefore, compromises have to be reached and the goal becomes one of optimizing each value rather than maximizing one at the expense of another. Thus, values such as freedom and equality may be in conflict. Given differential inheritance and abilities, if each person is free to develop his or her own potentials a condition of equality will not exist. If we attempt to achieve equality, then the freedom to develop individual potentials to the fullest may not be possible. The goal should be to optimize each of these values. For these and other reasons, equity is probably a better goal than equality. The definition also stresses changing belief and value systems to account for the fact that these are not static but are changing through time. Development is termed a self-generating process because once it is started it creates its own spiritual and psychic energy which keeps it going.

If we accept this definition of development and apply it to different units such as individuals, communities and nations then development is seen to be a variable which ranges from less-developed to developed to over-developed. In addition, it may be even, uniform or balanced or it may be uneven, variable or unbalanced with respect to the needs being met or with respect to different sections of the country or to different elements of the population. It is a temporary and dynamic phenomenon. Potentials can be lost as well as brought forth.

In the United States, we might say that groups such as the Amish are well developed because they seem to have optimized their potentials and relationships to a point where they are meeting their physical, emotional and spiritual needs according to their belief and value systems with minimal conflict with the larger society. Areas like Appalachia, where some basic needs like nutrition are not being met would be considered less developed and groups like the jet set which are meeting basic needs and engaging in a high proportion of luxuries would be considered over-developed. Both groups are unevenly developed. It is possible that as a nation as a whole we are meeting our physical needs better than our emotional and spiritual needs. Thus, the United States, like most countries, would not qualify as a fully developed country but as unevenly developed. The extent of this unevenness can only be determined through some form of national survey. Overall statements and comparisons among countries must await the construction of instruments for measuring the satisfaction of needs.

Since potentials are not observable they must be imputed and measured by the use of a surrogate. The surrogate is the satisfaction of needs, but this should not be limited to the basic needs concept now in vogue but should include the emotional and spiritual needs as well. In addition, we need some measure of the adequacy of relationships or the institutional structures through which people attempt to meet their needs. Political and economic freedoms would be part of this. Thus the fulfillment of human rights must be part and parcel of the needs to be addressed.

This definition of development does not suggest doing away with the GNP but it does suggest that GNP should not be equated with development. For assistance programs, international transfers, measures of productive capacity, etc. the GNP may still be

useful. Its major definitional use would be to place countries into low, medium and high income categories or economic growth categories. It is one measure of the financial means available for development. It is not an end-in-itself or final goal. End goals are the fulfillment of positive human potentials, freedom and justice.

IMPLICATIONS OF THIS DEFINITION

There are a number of implications of this definition of development which should be noted. First, if development takes place within the context of changing belief and value systems then it behooves us to know what these beliefs and values are and how they are changing. While it may be assumed that there are certain universal beliefs and values like peace, freedom and the maintenance of life there are a host of others which are culturally specific which need to be known. The degree to which these are being satisfied is also highly relevant knowledge. Studies such as Myrdal's American Dilemma, which indicates the degree of consistency between values and practice, would be a useful starting point in any serious development effort. We should be aware, however, that as difficult and time consuming as such studies may be, the more difficult task will be to design agreed upon programs to overcome demonstrated deficiencies. It is usually easier to achieve agreement on values and goals than it is to get agreement on the means or action to be taken to achieve these goals. The recent study by Bluhm[14] on the self-perception of poverty is instructive here. This research suggests that the relationship between the possession of material goods and the self-perception of poverty is not a function of how much you have, but it is what you have that counts. The possession of certain material goods, such as toilets and electric lights which are objective indicators of material wealth, were associated with subjective feelings of poverty, whereas other items, such as size and type of house construction, piped water and a clean house, were associated with feelings of wealth.

The importance of perception is also brought out strongly by Andrea Couture and Ary Bordes[15] in their account of the public health program in Haiti in which the health services in rural areas were considered by the people to be inferior simply because they were available in the rural areas. Medical personnel who worked in poor communities were perceived as incompetent people who could not hold down important office jobs in the capital.

This leads to the second implication of the definition of development. For meaningful development to take place it must be implemented with the full participation of the people at the local level. Most writers today and most assistance programs subscribe to this method of development and there are useful research studies which indicate the importance of participation to the success of development projects.[16] Yet, this is still observed more in rhetoric than in practice.

Another implication is that development is not comparative except for cultural units which have similar belief and value systems. Both Iran and Pakistan today are turning toward the institution of an Islamic state. Insofar as this differs from other value systems their development will be different but just as valid, meaningful and real for these societies as the approach taken in Tanzania according to quite different beliefs and values, which in turn differs from the Chinese ideology of communism and service to the State. Because beliefs and values change over time, development is not an end-state or terminal position but is a process of becoming. This helps explain why China, after several years of experience with low-level technology and the eradication of many social ills, is now turning to the West and giving greater emphasis to industrial technology.

HOW DOES DEVELOPMENT DIFFER FROM CHANGE AND GROWTH?

CONCEPT	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES OR ARENAS
Change:	making something different	- family structure - hem line - mini skirts - hair length
Growth:	making something larger or more numerous: thus, growth implies change	- University enrollment - GNP - height and weight - cancer
Development:	bringing forth of human potentials according to the value system of the people involved (individuals, groups, organizations, communities, societies; regions, world)	- social - political - economic - religious/moral - intellectual - physical - cultural - aesthetic

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHANGE, GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

CHARACTERISTICS		Concepts		
		Change	Growth	Development
Value	Positive	x	x	x
	Negative	x	x	-
Speed	Rapid	x	x	-
	Slow	x	x	x
Magnitude	Small	x	x	x
	Large	x	x	-
State	Permanent	-	-	-
	Temporary	x	x	x
Stimulus	Internal	x	x	x
	External	x	x	x
Direction	Gain	x	x	x
	Loss	x	-	-
Nature	End-State	-	-	-
	Process of Becoming	x	x	x
Agent	Human Intervention	x	x	x
	Natural Causes	x	x	-
Process	Negotiated	x	x	x
	Non-Negotiated	x	x	-
Socio-Economic Structure	Change Required	-	-	x
	No Change Required	x	x	-

This table shows that both change and growth can be positive or negative. That is, they may be either good or bad according to some criterion of value. However, development is not ordinarily thought of except in the positive sense of bringing out those potentials which are desirable in nature. This does not deny that there are negative potentials, but it suggests that development itself is a value concept which emphasizes those potentials which are valued. When undesirable potentials such as authoritarianism or dependency are cultivated or brought out, we have a case of negative change or growth but not development.

The table also shows that both growth and development connote some form of gain or increase, whereas change can imply either a gain or a loss. Change and growth may be

slow or rapid, but development is a much more complicated process and is usually slow. Revolutions can change governments and social structures fairly rapidly, but as the example of Iran suggests, development takes place after the revolution and is a lot slower. With regard to size or magnitude all three of these processes may involve small or large differences.

All three processes are by nature a process-of-becoming rather than final or end-states. They are usually thought of as temporary in nature, especially in the historical sense. Sometimes the new state or condition which is brought about lasts for a long time and may appear to be permanent, but if watched for sufficient time, alterations of one kind or another will be observed. Schwarzweller's study of rural-urban migration[17] and its turnaround provides ample evidence of the transitory nature of change and raises serious questions about extrapolating rates of change. Also, each of these processes may occur internally without outside interference or influence, or they may be brought about through external forces.

Change and growth may be brought about through natural causes or through human intervention. Development is a more conscious process involving moral choices and usually requires some form of human intervention in the form of policy and programs. Thus as distinguished from growth and change, development must be negotiated with the unit involved. Some would say planned, but, since planning has been usurped by professionals who tend to limit negotiation to their own circles, emphasis is placed here on negotiation with the unit undergoing development. Finally, in order for development to take place initially and to continue thereafter, the socio-economic structure of human relations must change in the direction of open participation, equal rights, and the fundamental recognition of the dignity and worth of every individual, unless they prove themselves otherwise.

In summary, development may involve both change and growth but differs from them in that it always deals with desirable potentials and is always positive in nature. It is usually slow and, like growth, it always involves a gain. It requires human intervention and it requires negotiation with the unit undergoing the development process. It is a conscious and rational process which involves a change in the socio-economic structure of human relationships to provide for greater recognition of individual worth and participation.

NOTES

[1]Hochschield, Steven F. "Technical Assistance and International Development: A Need for Fundamental Change", Focus 1978/3, pp. 3-7.

[2]Levinson, Jerome and Juan de Onis, The Alliance that Lost its Way, Chicago: Quandrangle Books, Inc., 1970, p. 308.

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[9]Seers, Dudley, "The New Meaning of Development", International Development Review, 1977/3, pp. 2-7.

[10]Goulet, Denis, The Cruel Choice: A New Concept in the Theory of Development, New York: Atheneum, 1977, pp. 332-334.

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[12]Timbergen, Jan (Coordinator), Reshaping the International Order: A Report to the Club of Rome, New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1976, pp. 71-75.

[13]The Atlantic Council's Working Group on the Successors Generation, The Teaching of Values and the Successor Generation, Washington, D.C.: The Atlantic Council of the United States, February, 1983.

[14]Bluhm, Louis H., "Self-Perception of Poverty Among 'Colonial' Farmers in Brazil: Is the Symbolic-Interactionist Perspective Useful?" Rural Sociology, 44(1), 1979, pp. 176-188.

[15] Couture, Andrea and Ary Bordes, For the People for a Change, Boston: Beacon Press, 1978.

[16] See for example, Development Alternatives, Strategies for Small Farmer Development: An Empirical Study of Rural Development Projects, Washington, D.C.: Development Alternatives, Inc., 1975.

[17] Schwarzweller, Harry K., "Migration and the Changing Rural Scene", Rural Sociology, Vol. 44, No. 1, Spring, 1979. pp. 7-23.